MrPaw

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Are US non-voters becoming more Republican?

Blue Rose research says yes:

"Politically disengaged voters have become much more Republican, And because less-engaged voters swung away from [Democrats], an expanded electorate meant a more Republican electorate."

[Blue Rose Research, 2024] (On Ezra Klein show, major professional pollsters)

***On Data and Democracy* says no:**

"Claims of a decisive pro-Republican shift among the overall non-voting population are not supported by the most reliable, large-scale post-election data currently available."

[Bonica et al., 2025] (Berkeley professor co–author, major professional researchers)

Several factors drive the disagreement:

- The problem is very hard (it's difficult to poll non–voters)
- Different data sources
  - Blue Rose aggregates its own private data
  - The *On Data and Democracy* posts use public data, e.g. the cooperative election study (CES).
- **Very different statistical methods:** ⋆
  - Blue Rose uses Bayesian hierarchical modeling
  - The CES uses calibration weighting

Our work won't resolve the dispute. (Anyway, we'd need access to Blue Rose's private data and modeling to even try.)

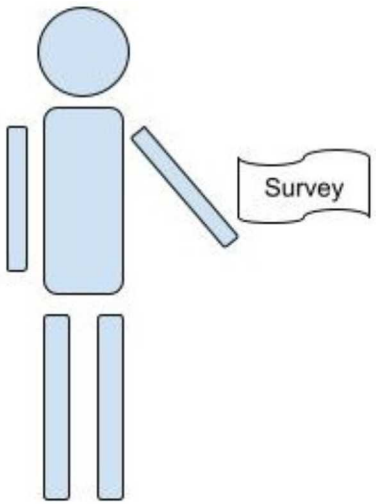
But we can form a like–to–like comparison between the methodologies. (And hope that Blue Rose tries our software package.)

The basic problem

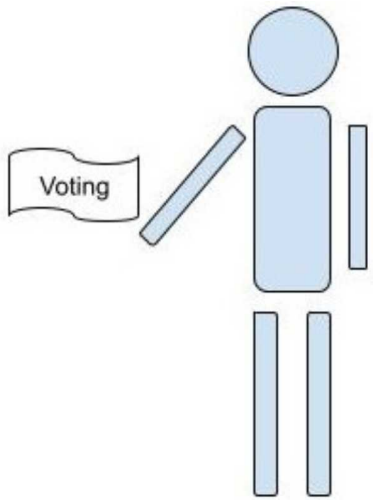
We have a survey population, for whom we observe:

- Covariates x (e.g. race, gender, zip code, age, education level)
- Responses y (e.g. A binary response to “do you support policy such–and–such”)

We want the average response in a target population, in which we observe only covariates.



Observe (x_s, y_s) for $s = 1, \ldots, \mathcal{N}_S$



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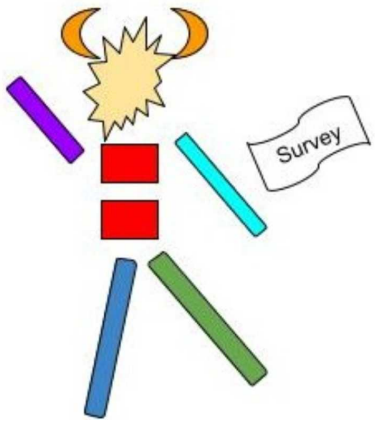

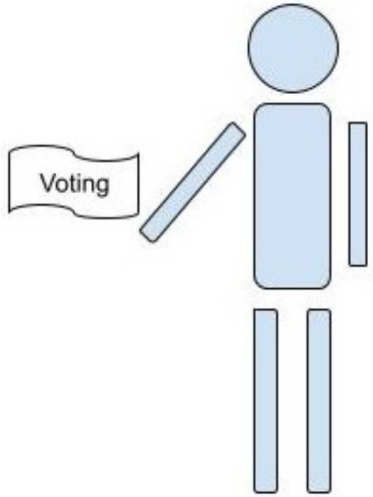

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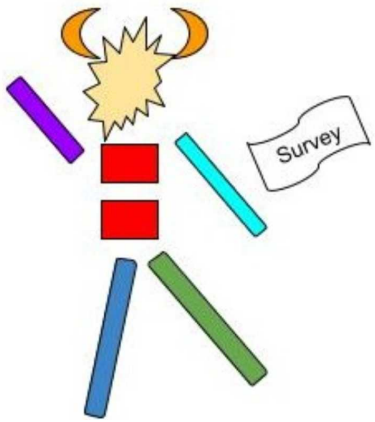

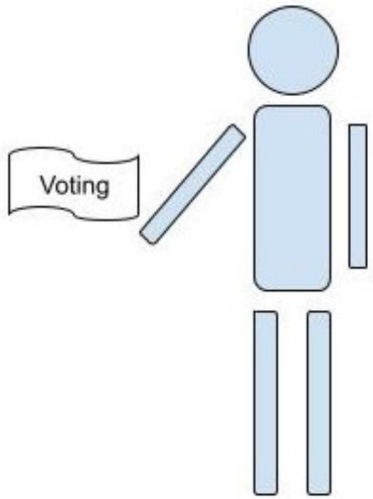

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Our survey results may be biased.

How can we use the covariates to say something about the target responses?

Two approaches

We want $\mu := \frac{1}{N_T} \sum_{n \in \mathcal{N}_T} y_p$, but don't observe y_p in the target population.

- Assume $p(y|x)$ is the same in both populations,
- But the distribution of x may be different in the survey and target.

Calibration weighting

$\hat{\mu}_{\text{CAL}} := \frac{1}{N_S} \sum_{n \in \mathcal{N}_S} w_s y_s$

For some weights w_s on the survey observations.

Model–based

References

Blue Rose Research. 2024 Election Retrospective Presentation. https://data.blueroseresearch.org/2024retro-download, 2024. Accessed on 2024-10-26.

A. Bonica, R. Fordham, J. Grumbach, and E. Tiburcio. Did non-voters really flip Republican in 2024? The evidence says no. https://data4democracy.substack.com/p/did-non-voters-really-flip-republican, April 2025.